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November 16, 2015

To: Instructional Quality Commission
c/o Thomas Adams, Executive Director
1430 N Street, Suite 3207
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Expert Input from Dr. Ashok Aklujkar

Enclosed is a letter from Dr. Ashok Aklujkar, professor emeritus in the Department of Asian Studies, University of British Columbia, an expert in Sanskrit language and ancient Indian history. He received his Ph.D. degree in Sanskrit and Indian Studies from Harvard University.

At our request, he has addressed several key historical points which relate to Uberoi edits one to four: 1) plausibility of Aryan Migration theory; 2) date of the Vedic literature; 3) Indo-European speakers passing through Iran to India; 4) plausibility of Dravidian language in the Indus region; and 5) plausibility of Indo-European languages being indigenous to India.

With kind regards,

Prof. Shiva G. Bajpai, Ph.D. (SOAS, London)
Professor Emeritus of History
Former Director, Asian Studies,
California State University, Northridge

Acharya Arumuganathaswami
Managing Editor
Hinduism Today Magazine



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November 15, 2015

Dear Acharya Arumugnathaswami

and

Dear Professor Shiva Bajpai

In response to your appeal of November 10, 2015, I am sending the following response. I have worked as a specialist since 1962, that is, for about 53 years, in India as well outside India, mostly in North America at the University of British Columbia, but also at seven world-class universities (University of Hamburg, 01 May - 26 Jul 2000. Harvard University, Sep-Dec 2002. University of Rome, La Sapienza, 05 -31 May 2003. University of Kyoto, 01 Oct 2003 - 31 Mar 2004. University of Paris, 13-31 May 2004. University of Oxford, 21 Apr- 18 Jun 2005. Philipps University, Marburg, Mercator Visiting Professor, 18 Oct 2010 -18 Feb 2011). Further, I am scheduled to go as a visiting professor to the University of Pune in September-October 2016 and have been a regular participant in the meetings of the American Oriental Society as well as an invited lecturer at almost all prominent places of Sanskritic learning in India and elsewhere. In the last two decades, I have also been an active member of the electronic academic forums such as Indology, Buddha-L, Buddha-H and Bharatiya Vidvat Parishad. Thus, as a widely informed and deeply committed student of the field on which the paragraph you have quoted bears, I can tell you the following:

1. The Aryan Invasion/Migration theory/hypothesis, which thinks of a linguistic, cultural or ethnic group called Aryans/Āryas coming to India and founding the Vedic/Sanskritic civilization is no longer the main-stream theory. Most specialists have either given it up, are open to both possibilities or are no longer interested in discussing it. Very few specialists like Prof. Michael Witzel of Harvard discuss it, and Prof. Witzel, whom I respect for his knowledge of Vedic Sanskrit and Vedic literature, adopts underhanded tactics in defending the theory/hypothesis. On his forum, he does not give publicity to the arguments put forward by the other side. If he at all refers to it, he first puts them in a negative

light by using labels such as X is a banker or is not a university professor (why can one not be a good historical researcher while doing some other job for his/her worldly existence? What matters after all is grasp of the relevant materials and logical acumen). He refers to a paper/book in which an evidence and argument favorable to his position is found, but when a person like me or Dr. Nicholas Kazanas looks up the publication, he/she finds out that the publication does not make exactly the same point. (For want of time, I will not elaborate on this scholarly dishonesty.)

2. When the evidence from texts, archaeology, geology, landsat imaging and astronomy etc. is cumulatively taken into consideration, it becomes clear that the oldest parts of Vedic literature could not have been composed later than 1900 B.C.; the more probable date would be somewhere between the fourth and third millennium B.C. Further research may push it backwards but not forwards.

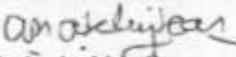
3. The privileging of Iranian evidence over Indic evidence is almost entirely based on the historical-comparative branch of linguistics. There is no archaeological evidence to support it. But the linguistic argument is fatally underdetermined by at least two facts. (a) The surviving Iranian literature, at least in its present form, is demonstrably later, much much smaller and badly preserved (lots of corruptions of readings, lack of order in contents and so on). (2) There is considerable circular argument in the reconstruction of language forms. Linguists think that the archaeologists have proved the priority of the Iranian source of information and the archaeologist think that they are following sound linguistics.

4. Hardly anyone, except Prof. Asko Parpola, nowadays supports attribution of Dravidian languages to the Indus region. A few Dravidian languages could have been spoken in north-west India, but the evidence as a whole points in the direction that there already was a 'linguistic area' (in the sense in which the late Prof. M.B. Emeneau used the term) when the Indus civilization flourished.

5. In the present state of research, the hypothesis that the Indo-European languages were indigenous to the Punjab-Haryana area of the Indian sub-continent makes more sense than the hypothesis that they came from outside. There is no archaeological evidence of a large-scale people movement or dominant culture movement into India after the seven thousand B.C.

I have typed the above in the rush of preparing for a month-long trip to India. I have to be at the airport in the next 30 minutes. Please forgive any oversights that might have remained in the above. I have not had the time needed to re-read it carefully. I hope the intended points are reasonably clear.

With best wishes,


Ashok Aklujkar
Professor Emeritus
University of British Columbia